

September 28, 2016

## DOH-OKALOOSA RECOGNIZES SEPTEMBER 28 AS WORLD RABIES DAY



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**Ft. Walton Beach, Fla** – World Rabies Day is celebrated every year on September 28, a day when the world unites in the fight against rabies. The Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County (DOH-Okaloosa) hopes to do their part to put an end to this condition through educational efforts aimed at demonstrating the impact of human and animal rabies, how easy it is to prevent rabies from occurring, and how to eliminate the main sources of the disease.

“The vast majority of rabies cases reported each year occur in wild animals like raccoons, skunks, bats, stray cats and foxes,” stated Carrie Ziegler, Assistant Director of DOH-Okaloosa. “An animal with rabies can infect other wild animals, domestic animals that have not been vaccinated against rabies, and even humans.”

DOH-Okaloosa is working to encourage all pet owners to have their domestic animals vaccinated against rabies, and prevent them from having any contact with wildlife, particularly raccoons, bats, foxes, skunks, stray cats and coyotes.

Some easy ways to prevent the spread of rabies:

- Avoid direct human and domestic animal contact with wild animals.
- Have your veterinarian vaccinate pets and at-risk livestock, make sure you follow your veterinarian's instructions for revaccination.
- Do not allow your pets to run free. Follow leash laws by keeping pets and livestock secured on your property.
- Never feed wild or stray animals and avoid attracting them with outdoors food sources. Feed your pets indoors.
- If your animal is attacked by a wild, stray or unvaccinated animal, DO NOT examine your pet for injuries without wearing gloves. DO wash your pet with soap and water to remove saliva from the attacking animal. DO NOT let your animal come into contact with other animals or people until the situation can be handled by animal control or county health department staff.
- Support animal control in efforts to reduce feral and stray animal populations.

Anyone bitten by a possible rabies-infected animal should immediately scrub the wound with lots of soap and running water for five to ten minutes, go to their family doctor or nearest emergency room, and give a description of the animal and where it's located to the provider.

For more information on rabies prevention, visit [www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/rabies/index.html](http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/rabies/index.html) or call the DOH-Okaloosa Epidemiology Section at 850-833-9247.

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